



AN EMOTION-WORK PERSPECTIVE ON GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK



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Overview:

“Academic work, in a culture of growing focus on evaluation and presentation, is itself very much focused on emotion-work”

(Rietti 2009, p.57)

“[T]eaching staff, in higher education, are expected to perform emotional labour in order to achieve the dual outcomes of customer (i.e., student) satisfaction, and profit for the management”

(Constanti and Gibbs 2004, p.243)

Overview:

“[I]n addition to dealing with the [criticism] itself, people must also contend with the implications... for their self-esteem, and sometimes these two responses are in conflict... For example, people can dismiss the validity of negative feedback by rejecting it as inaccurate or biased”

(Nussbaum and Dweck 2008, p.599)

Overview:

1. The emotion-work framework
2. Emotional dimensions of feedback exchanges
3. Conceptualising feedback as emotion-work
4. Reducing and simplifying emotional labour

1. The emotion-work framework

“Why is the emotional experience of adults in daily life as orderly as it is? Why, generally speaking, do people feel gay at parties, sad at funerals, happy at weddings?”
(Hochschild 1978, p.552)



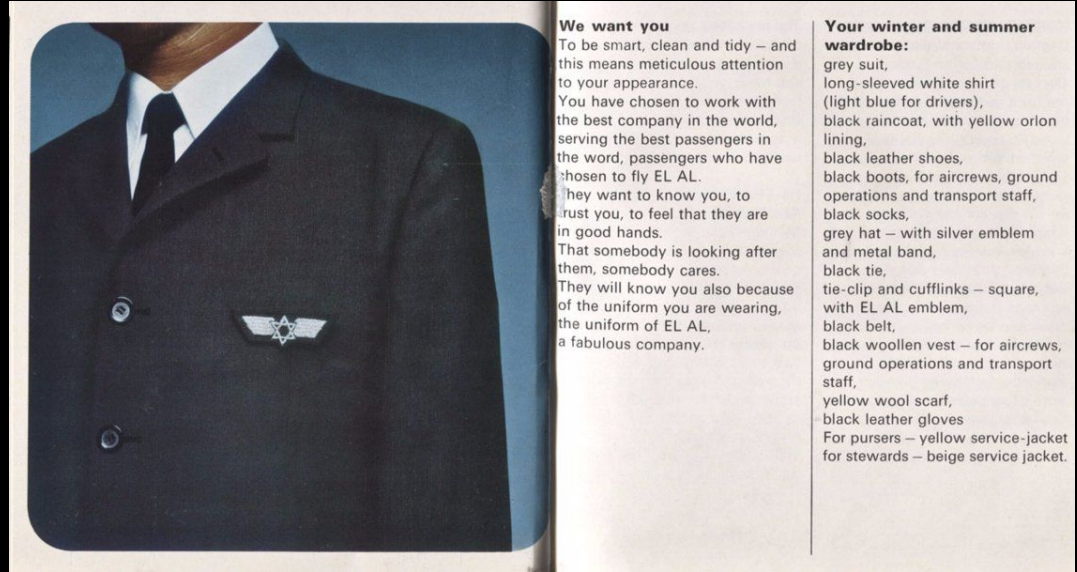
1. The emotion-work framework



1. The emotion-work framework

“They want to know you, to trust you, to feel that they are in good hands. Somebody is looking after them; somebody cares.”

El Al Israel instructions for flight crew, c.1970



1. The emotion-work framework



Difficult passenger



Feelings of annoyance



Display of courtesy

1. The emotion-work framework

Situation

Emotional
Experience

Emotional
Display

Difficult passenger

Feelings of annoyance

Display of courtesy

1. The emotion-work framework

“Why is the emotional experience of adults in daily life as orderly as it is? Why, generally speaking, do people feel gay at parties, sad at funerals, happy at weddings?”

(Hochschild 1978, p.552)

1. The emotion-work framework

FRAMING RULES

Situation

Difficult passenger

FEELING RULES

Emotional
Experience

Feelings of annoyance

DISPLAY RULES

Emotional
Display

Display of courtesy

1. The emotion-work framework



Emotional response

Discrepancy
Emotion-work



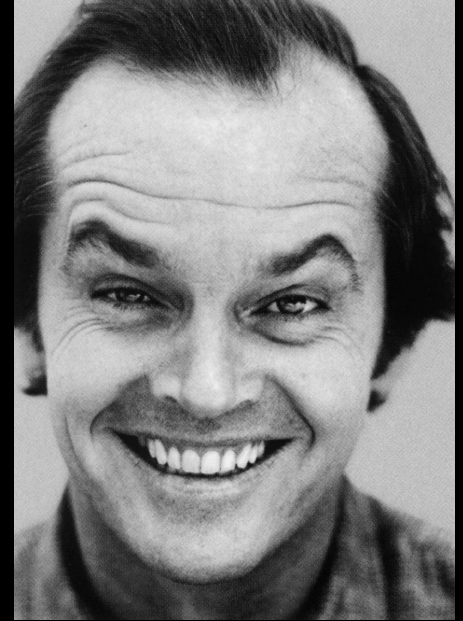
Expression

1. The emotion-work framework



Surface acting:
suppress felt emotions,
focus on conforming
behaviour to display
rules

Deep acting:
work to conform felt
emotions to feeling
rules; allow display to
follow without effort



1. The emotion-work framework

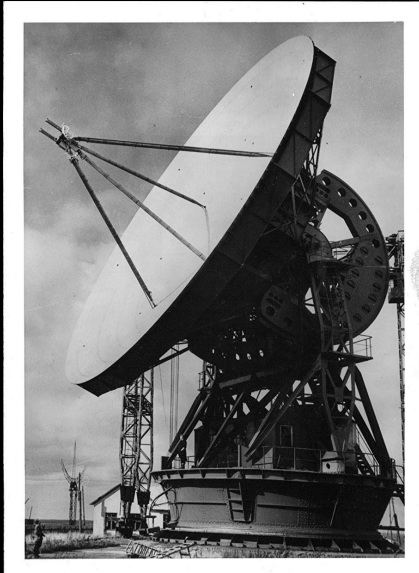
“[Surface acting] is related to lower job satisfaction, lower general well-being, and an enhanced risk of burnout and other indicators of strain”

(Semmer et al 2015, p.47)

“[I]f people construct a social reality that exceeds their emotional capacity to sustain it, they will either breach the reality (and experience emotional deviance) or try to escape it”

(Carr 1998, p.325)

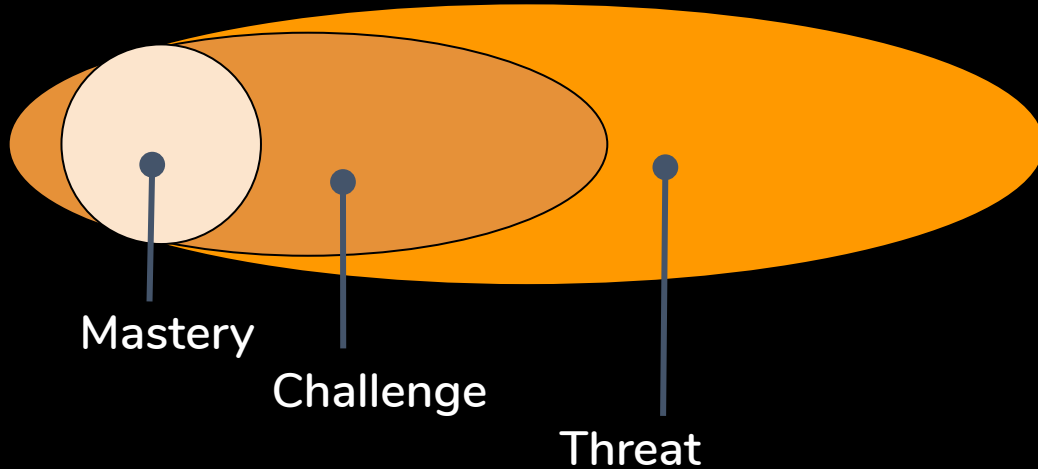
2. Emotional dimensions of feedback exchanges



“[W]hen messages are transmitted from a sender to a receiver, the receiver’s role is as crucial as the sender’s, and involves decoding, interpreting, and responding to the message”

(Winstone et al 2017, p.2026)

2. Emotional dimensions of feedback exchanges



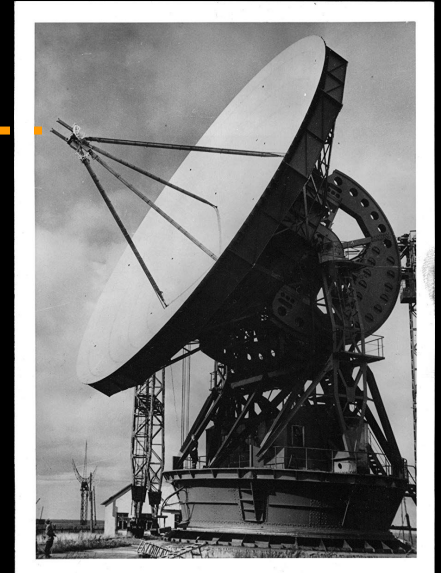
Tasks which are too challenging are liable to be perceived as a threat to self-esteem

...especially if there is no opportunity to rectify errors

2. Emotional dimensions of feedback exchanges

Constructive Responses	Defensive Responses
Persistent/renewed effort	Withdrawal of commitment
Help-seeking behaviours	Undermine credibility of feedback
Attitude change	Symbolic self-completion
Challenging social comparison	Comforting social comparison

2. Emotional dimensions of feedback exchanges



3. Conceptualising feedback as emotion-work

Questions we can ask if we think of fb as emotion-work:

FRAMING RULES

FEELING RULES

DISPLAY RULES

What are the rules that govern feedback exchanges?

What should those rules be?

Who bears the emotional workload? Who should?

What can be done to redistribute emotional labour (if we should)?

What can be done to reduce the emotional workload across the board?

4. Reducing and simplifying emotional labour

What can be improved/mitigated?

- Amount of emotion work to be done
- Difficulty of work, determined by:
 - strength of feeling proscribed by feeling rules
 - relative strictness of display rules

4. Reducing and simplifying emotional labour

- Offer less feedback, fewer opportunities for feedback?
 - reduces amount of emotion work for tutors
 - ...but increases difficulty for students?
 - ...and for tutors?
 - other (potential) pedagogical reasons no to
 - overall: shifts the burden onto students

4. Reducing and simplifying emotional labour

Formative assessment:

- creates opportunities for more feedback
- offers learners opportunities for remediation (c.f. Nussbaum and Dweck)

...but what does it achieve with regard to emotion-work?

4. Reducing and simplifying emotional labour

- Offer more feedback, more opportunities for feedback?
 - increases amount of emotion work for all
 - ...but maybe decreases difficulty for students?
 - ...and for tutors?

Whatever formative assessment achieves with regard to reducing emotion work, it does not do it by increasing the sheer amount of feedback provided.

4. Reducing and simplifying emotional labour

What does it change?

- DISPLAY RULES
- FEELING RULES
- FRAMING RULES

4. Reducing and simplifying emotional labour

Formative assessment changes the **FRAMING RULES**:

- Lower stakes
- So, less prone to strong emotional responses
- So, less difficult surface acting

Conclusion:

- Shared activity, more collaborative learning
- Change the framing rules to reduce pressure, lower stakes, facilitate positive responses to criticism
- ...and in doing so, make emotion work easier for tutors

Works cited:

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